

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 043282 TOSEC 040244

EXDIS FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BUENOS AIRES 1186 ACTIONSECSTATE INFO DIA
21 FEB

QUOTE

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 1186

EXDIS

DEPT PASS TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

1. ON FEBRUARY 19, AMBASSADOR HILL, ACCOMPANIED BY THE DEFENSE ATTACHE, ACTING AIR ATTACHE AND THE ACTING CHIEF OF AIR FORCE SECTION USMILGP, CALLED ON NEW ARGENTINE AIR FORCE CINC AGOSTI.

2. AGOSTI, WITHOUT ANY OF HIS AIDES PRESENT, RECEIVED THE AMBASSADOR AND HIS PARTY IN HIS OFFICE IN AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS. AFTER A BRIEF BUT WARM EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, AMBASSADOR HILL TURNED CONVERSATION TOWARD SPECIFIC MATTERS OF INTEREST BETWEEN OUR TWO AIR FORCES. THOUGH HE FOLLOWED THE AMBASSADOR'S POINTS CLOSELY, AGOSTI APPEARED NOT TO BE WELL INFORMED ON THE SUBJECT AND EVIDENCED INTEREST IN RAISING OTHER TOPICS.

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3. AT WHAT AMBASSADOR AND PARTY BELIEVED TO BE END OF PROTOCOL

VISIT, AGOSTI ASKED THAT HE BE ALLOWED TO RAISE ONE QUESTION WITH THE AMBASSADOR. HE ASKED THE AMBASSADOR FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. AMBASSADOR HILL SAID HE WOULD BE GLAD TO ANSWER THE QUESTION BUT NOTED THAT TO BE USEFUL, HE WOULD HAVE TO BE FRANK AND CANDID IN REVIEWING THE SITUATION. AGOSTI RESPONDED THIS WAS EXACTLY THE KIND OF ANALYSIS HE WANTED FROM THE AMBASSADOR. AMBASSADOR HILL NOTED THAT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ARGENTINA WAS A DIFFICULT ONE BUT STRESSED AS HE DID THOROUGHOUT THE COMVERSATION THAT SOLUTIONS TO ARGENTINA'S PRESENT DIFFICULTIES COULD ONLY COME FROM THE ARGENTINES THEMSELVES. THE US WISHED TO BE A FRIEND OF ARGENTINA BUT HAD LEARNED THROUGH LONG EXPERIENCE THAT IT DID NEITHER ITSELF NOR ARGENTINA ANY GOOD BY INTERVENING IN LOCAL MATTERS.

4. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THERE WAS A GROWING BELIEF IN THE US THAT THE CONSTITUTIONALIST POLICY OF THE ARMED FORCES MOST RECENTLY EXPRESSED BY GENERAL VIDELA IN GENERAL WAS GIVING WAY TO A FORMING OF RESIGNATION AMONG POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERS THAT ONLY A MILITARY INTERVENTION COULD DEAL WITH THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT WHETHER OR NOT THIS WAS INDEED THE CASE, IT WAS A MATTER FOR THE ARGENTINES TO DECIDE AMONG THEMSELVES. AT THIS POINT IN TIME, THE AMBASSADOR NOTED, HE IN ALL CANDOR COULD NOT DENY THAT MANY INFLUENTIAL ARGENTINES WERE SEEKING TO DISCERN THE POLICY THE US WOULD ADOPT IF AN INTERVENTION SHOULD INDEED OCCUR. HE NOTED THAT AT PRESENT IT IS THE US GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO RECOGNIZE A GOVERNMENT THAT EFFECTIVELY EXERCISES POWER AND RESPONSIBLY DISCHARGES ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS.

5. HOWEVER ARGENTINA RESOLVED ITS PROBLEMS, THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT HE HAD AN OBLIGATION TO TELL GENERAL AGOSTI THAT THERE WERE TWO PROBLEM AREAS WHICH COULD PERTURB US/ARGENTINE RELATIONS. THE FIRST CONCERNED INVESTMENT PROBLEMS. (AT THIS POINT THE AMBASSADOR BRIEFLY REVIEWED OUR OUTSTANDING INVESTMENT DISPUTES AND SYNTHESIZED FOR AGOSTI THE RELEVANT PORTIONS OF THE US TRADE ACT.) HE FURTHER NOTED THAT THE COUNTRY'S PRESENT ECONOMIC STATE WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE COUNTRY TO RAISE FUNDS WITHOUT RECOURSE TO THE IMF OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS. THE SECOND BROAD AREA IN WHICH PROBLEMS COULD ARISE WOULD BE IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AN ISSUE THAT HAD BECOME SENSITIVE IN THE US.

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6. AGOSTI FOLLOWED AMBASSADOR'S ENTIRE EXPOSITION WITH GREAT ATTENTION AND BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE AMBASSADOR HAD ALL OF THE AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS TRANSLATED INTO SPANISH TO AVOID CONFUSION EVEN THOUGH AGOSTI SPEAKS ENGLISH. IT WAS CLEAR AS AGOSTI ESCORTED AMBASSADOR HILL TO HIS CAR THAT HIS EXPRESSIONS OF THANKS FOR HIS CANDID APPRAISAL WERE VERY SINCERE ONES.

7. COMMENT: AMBASSADOR HILL TOLD AGOSTI HE WOULD NOT OBJECT IF
SUBSTANCE OF CONVERSATION WERE DISCUSSED WITH ARMY AND NAVY
CINCS. DOUBTLESS AGOSTI WILL SOON TRANSMIT THIS CONVERSATION
TO HIS TWO FELLOW CINCS WHO ALONG WITH AGOSTI HAVE IN RECENT DAYS
TRIED THROUGH SEVERAL INDIRECT MEANS TO ASSESS US VIEWS RE THE
POLITICAL SITUATION. (DETAILED MEMCOM WILL FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL.)
HILL UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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